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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 003480

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: SADRIST-BADR CORPS CLASH UPDATE

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT FORD FOR REASONS
1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (SBU) Post has heard no further reports of Sadrism-Badr Corps violence since the August 24 clashes between the two groups in South and South Central Iraq, as well as Sadr City. The August 24 confrontation began after Sadrists blamed Badr Corps for an apparent arson-caused fire at the building that formerly housed Muqtada al Sadr's office in Najaf.

2. (SBU) At approximately 1200 hrs on August 25, Muqtada al Sadr held a press conference in which he told his followers to lay down their weapons and eschew violence. He then called on SCIRI leader Abdul Aziz al Hakim to make a similar public statement to his followers. PolOff contacted the SCIRI chief of staff, Haitham al Hussein, and told him that a statement from Hakim urging calm would be in the interest of all factions. Haitham agreed, and said he would encourage Hakim to act accordingly. (NOTE: We have heard unconfirmed reports that both Hakim and Sadr have made subsequent conciliatory statements. We further understand that the Sadrism Minister of Transportation who announced suspension of his participation in the government August 24 has indicated that he will now return to work.)

3. (C) Sadrism representatives Bara al-Araji and Kusai Abdul Wahib suggested to PolOff that Badr Corps may have instigated the violence for one or more of the following reasons: (a) counter Muqtada's "increasing" popularity, (b) wreck the constitution process, and (c) provoke Sadrism violence to which Coalition forces would feel compelled to respond. PolOff replied by pressing the Sadrists to urge their followers to avoid confrontation, as violence would only undermine progress on the constitution.

4. (C) Minister of Interior Bayan Jabr has sent BG Mohammed, the SCIRI-linked commander of the "Wolf Brigade," to Najaf to assess the situation. MOI sources claim that the Minister has discussed the events with Grand Ayatollah Sistani, as well as with Prime Minister Ja'fari. Given uncertainty over further developments, Jabr has reportedly canceled a scheduled visit to Amman to meet the Jordanian Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior.
Khalilzad